

Greenbelt Center Elementary School

MIHP # PG: 67-4-1

11 Crescent Road
Greenbelt, Prince George's County, MD

Constructed from 1936- 1937

Public Access

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School, now the Greenbelt Community Center, is a distinguished example of early modern architecture in the State of Maryland and illustrates the modern architectural style employed throughout Greenbelt. The exterior, with its flat roof, glass block windows, and simple facades exemplifies the International Style forms of the early modern movement in the United States and was one of the earliest examples of modernist architecture and planning in the State of Maryland. The main structure, designed by Reginald Wadsworth and Douglas Ellington, was completed in 1937, and a compatible addition was constructed in 1968.¹ The building has extensive fenestration and includes elegant detailing both inside and outside, including a series of bas reliefs on the front elevation designed by Lenore Thomas and depicting the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States. Although the building is no longer used as a school, it has remained intact with minor modifications. Rooms once used as classrooms now function as artist studios, senior center spaces, and galleries. Most classrooms still include unique finishes, including original woodwork and built-in shelves and cupboards. The entire building has original doors, wall treatments, display cabinets, and windows.

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School, a model progressive school, was constructed as the community focal point of the 1930s federally planned "green town", Greenbelt, Maryland,

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic American Buildings Survey: Greenbelt Community Building*, (Washington, D.C.): 2.

and is therefore significant under Criterion C. As the central historic community institution in Greenbelt, the Center School is also significant under Criterion A for the period 1937-1987, representing the cooperative nature of Greenbelt and the continuity of the "Greenbelt philosophy of life" over the historic community's first 50 years. As the symbol of a continually successful experiment in social, architectural, and planning design, the Center School/Community Center meets the exceptional criteria for designation for a period of significance under 50 years old.

The town was part of President Roosevelt's work relief program and was an experiment in American social planning sponsored initially by the Resettlement Administration. The school functioned as both an educational institution during the day and social gathering space during the evening and on weekends. Its placement in relation to the design of the rest of Greenbelt was a key ingredient of its ability to fulfill these functions and exemplified the educational philosophy of Douglas Ellington, one of the architects. He placed the school near the center of town but at the edge of a recreational area and a broad expanse of greenbelt; at the same time, the building was integrally connected to the original commercial center and residential units of Greenbelt via a system of pedestrian linkages. Architecturally, the school stands at a transition point in school architecture internationally between European modernist schools and later single-story modernist school designs in the United States. The interior classrooms, hallways, and other spaces utilized innovative design features to help implement a progressive "learn-by-doing" curriculum.

The following National Register of Historic Places form was prepared for inventory documentation purposes only; the property has not been nominated to the National Register.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Greenbelt Center Elementary School

other names Greenbelt Community Center (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 11 Crescent Road ☐ not for publication

city or town Greenbelt ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Prince George's code 033 zip code 20770

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School

Recreation and Culture/auditorium, sports

Social/Meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social/Meeting Hall

Recreational and Culture/auditorium, sports

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Other: tar and gravel

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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Name of Property

Greenbelt Center Elementary School
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County and State

Description Summary:

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School, now the Greenbelt Community Center, is a distinguished example of early modern architecture in the State of Maryland and illustrates the modern architectural style employed throughout Greenbelt. The exterior, with its flat roof, glass block windows, and simple facades exemplifies the International Style forms of the early modern movement in the United States and was one of the earliest examples of modernist architecture and planning in the State of Maryland. The main structure, designed by Reginald Wadsworth and Douglas Ellington, was completed in 1937, and a compatible addition was constructed in 1968.¹ The building has extensive fenestration and includes elegant detailing both inside and outside, including a series of bas reliefs on the front elevation designed by Lenore Thomas and depicting the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States. The Center School is connected to other activities within Greenbelt via a network of pedestrian paths that was part of the original design for the town. Although the building is no longer used as a school, it has remained intact with minor modifications. Rooms once used as classrooms now function as artist studios, senior center spaces, and galleries. Most classrooms still include unique finishes, including original woodwork and built-in shelves and cupboards. The entire building has original doors, wall treatments, display cabinets, and windows.

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic American Buildings Survey: Greenbelt Community Building*, (Washington, D.C.): 2.

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General Description:

Landscape and Setting

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School is located near the center of the historic new town of Greenbelt, Maryland; it is set back from Crescent Road and is separated from the street with an expansive grassy lawn with scattered trees. The site is sloped to create a one-story difference at the rear. The Greenbelt Library sits directly to the southwest and the Greenbelt Municipal Building to the southeast. Vehicular access to the area is on the southeast side (this driveway also serves the Greenbelt Municipal Building). The driveway leads into a parking area that is directly east of the grassy front lawn of the structure. The drive continues north to an additional area of parking and loops around to the rear loading area (now the Adult Day Care Center). A second vehicular access point is to the west of the Greenbelt Library. This drive follows the west wall of the library to a large parking area that sits to the north of the library, and to the west of the Center School. The drive then continues to the community recreation center that sits north of the structure.

The original building is an L-shape with the east-west wing creating the wide front facade and the north-south wing containing the main classroom space. The 1968 addition continues the north-south wing, but is wider at the back as it juts out to the west. A fenced playground space sits to the west of the 1968 addition and facilitates what is now a nursery school. As befits its role as one of the central community institutions and destinations in Greenbelt, the Center School is linked with nearly all other public buildings or facilities via a system of pedestrian pathways, part of the original planning of the green town and still heavily used. A pedestrian sidewalk runs in front of the building (east-west) and continues to the western parking area via a stairwell. The walk then turns and runs north-south in front of the library, eventually connecting to the public sidewalk along Crescent Road; another branch goes across the western parking area and leads to one of the major areas of housing via an underpass under Crescent Road. An area of planted landscaping separates the front façade of the building from the pedestrian walkway. A rear walkway connects the back entrance of the Center School to the community recreation building to the north, and to the Youth Center and thence to Braden field to the west, which houses tennis courts, baseball diamonds, a football field, and a sand volleyball lot. Farther along to the north, the pathway goes around a large parking area and connects with Roosevelt Center, the town center of Greenbelt, which is the location of businesses, restaurants, a doctor's office, the post office, a gas station and auto repair shop, and the Coop Supermarket.

Detailed Description

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School is low in scale and simple in form. The original L-shaped building contained classroom space along the main (north-south) hallway on both the first and second floors. The east-west wing housed communal spaces such as the kitchen and cafeteria as well as the gymnasium/auditorium. There is no east-west hallway on the second floor because of the two-story height of the gym space. The main

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entrance faces south and the large front lawn is flanked on the west by the Greenbelt Library and on the east by the Greenbelt Municipal Building. The entire exterior of the building is white painted brick. The building exemplifies the International Style forms of the early modern movement in the United States, although the front façade with its curved walls at the main entrance, horizontal banding, and buttresses is slightly reminiscent of the Art Deco movement. Obvious modern elements include the flat roof and the use of glass block panels above a number of the entrances. The 1968 addition is to the north side of the original structure (the rear of the building) and is not visible from Crescent Road when looking at the main façade of the structure. The entire building has horizontal brick banding around the top (three bands on the original portion, two on the addition). There are also areas of brick banding connecting some of the windows.

Facades

The Center School is an L-shaped structure. The description of the facades begins with the south (main) façade and continues around the building in a counter-clockwise direction. Following the south façade there is the east(1) façade, the north(1) façade, the east(2) façade, the north(2) façade and the west façade.

South (front) Façade

The main façade is primarily white painted brick, above an unpainted concrete water table 20 inches high. From the front the building appears as a large rectangular block, with a front projection at the entrance. Along this projection are four buttresses with windows between and bas relief panels below. Both ends of the front façade have single story entry projections. A set of three brick beltcourses, the height of a single brick, runs horizontally along the main façade and both projections, just under the cornice.

The main entrance to the building is on the main façade, towards the western side. The main entrance is located at the southwest corner at the crux of the L. The walls of the projection curve elegantly into the recessed set of three doors; the depth of the recess is 52 inches. The entire doorway is surrounded by a heavy wood molding, 2 ½ inches wide. Above the main doorway is the first of the Indiana limestone bas relief panels with the inscription "We the People". It is 119 inches wide and 62 inches high. The triple doors are oak and are absent of decoration except for a simple ¼ inch incised rectangle echoing the shape of the door below the single light, which is at face level. The doors are painted a brick red color. Just inside there is a second set of triple doors in unpainted oak with three rows of vertical lights (each pane 12 and ¾ inches tall by 7 and ¼ inches wide) above a solid door w/an inlaid ¼ inch wide rectangle echoing the shape of the door. The inlaid decoration is on both sides of the door. Leading up to the main entrance is a concrete staircase of five risers, followed by a 73-inch deep concrete stoop and a 17-inch deep limestone threshold. Just to the west of the main entrance is a secondary entrance with handicapped access. This door is in the single story projection, and actually faces west. The door is also heavy wood painted brick red. The metal railing along the handicap ramp is also the same color. A third door is on the easterly side of the front façade, in the second single-story projection. This

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door leads to the backstage area of the auditorium space. This third entrance provides balance to the façade. The door also faces west out of the projection and is brick red in color.

Five large windows separate the four aerodynamic, fluted and curved buttresses. The buttresses allowed for the larger, unobstructed interior space of the gymnasium. They extend from the water table to the belt courses just below the roofline and are approximately 26 feet and 2 inches high. The windows are 15 feet tall x 8 feet wide and consist of ten single-paned, push-out casement windows each (2 across, 5 down); they are encased with brick red painted metal trim (which match the doors and railings) and are set high in the façade. The large windows allow light to permeate into the gymnasium space. Below each window is a bas relief panel set on a pedestal 29 inches tall, and 12 inches deep. Each bas relief is 8 feet wide and 4 feet 4 inches tall. Toward the bottom of each panel lettering 7 ¼ inches tall is incised into the stone (Indiana limestone) with the following phrases from the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States: "To Form a More Perfect Union"; "Establish Justice"; "Insure Domestic Tranquility"; "Provide for the Common Defense"; and "Promote the General Welfare".²

There is an area landscaped with shrubs and flowers directly in front of the main façade. A sidewalk parallels the front building line, about 15 to 20 feet away from the edge of the building. The structure originally contained lettering on the upper easterly side of the main façade reading "Greenbelt Center Elementary School". This lettering was removed when the building was transferred to City ownership and converted to a community center.

East(1) Façade

The east(1) façade is read south to north (front to back). The entire façade is white painted brick with unfinished concrete at the base, forming the wall of a full story basement. There is a small window on the southerly edge. Concrete stairs lead to a double door side entrance that is on the southerly side. The east(1) façade has two large, 16- pane casement windows (4 across, 4 down), 26 inches high and 48 wide, and one window with eight panes (2 columns by 4 rows). Next to this 8-pane window there is a side entrance to the building – at the end of the side hallway. A four-tread concrete stair leads to the entrance, and handicapped access is also provided. A large glass block panel sits above the doorway; it is nine rows by nine rows of 8-inch square glass blocks flush with the wall. To the north of the entryway, there is one additional 12-pane window (3 by 4). All of the windows on the east(1) façade are push-out casement windows with dark green painted metal trim. At the northerly end of the east(1) façade is a one-story bay that is slightly sunken due to the site's topography.

North(1) Façade

² Ibid, 4.

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The north(1) façade is the rear façade of the side hall of the original structure. Reading the façade east to west, the first element is the entrance to a loading area (now the entrance to an Adult Day Care Center), at the basement level. The entrance has a set of glass double doors and a brick red awning above. In addition, there are two windows to the west of the entryway. Behind the loading area, the rear façade of the side hallway shows the one-story windows of the present dining and kitchen area. This façade is set back from that of the loading area and is on the first floor level. From east to west, there are two twelve-pane windows (3 by 4), two four-pane windows (1 by 4), and three additional twelve-pane windows (3 x 4). The windows are push-out casements with dark green trim. Because the dining and kitchen side of the side hall is only one story, the second story rear façade of the gymnasium/auditorium is visible above. The easterly side of the roof above the dining and kitchen spaces houses the heating/cooling towers and a white brick chimney. To the west of the HVAC equipment, there are four fluted, protruding buttresses with three four-pane windows (2 across, 2 down) separating them. The lower end of the buttresses can be seen on the interior hallway along the gymnasium/auditorium, above the level of the top of the doors to the gym. On the very westerly edge of the north(1) façade there is a rear entrance to the building. Above this entrance is a glass block window of 7 rows of 5 glass blocks, each 8 inches square. The light is set flush with the wall.

About 40 feet north of the Adult Day Care Center is the original flagpole for the school, set into the center of a 57-inch by 57-inch pedestal that is 22 inches tall. The pedestal and flagpole were restored in 2000.

East(2) Façade

The east(2) façade comprises the eastern façade of the main classroom hallway of the original structure as well as the eastern façade of the 1968 addition. Both elements are two-stories, but due to the site topography, the original structure sits higher than the addition. The original structure has an identical first and second level façade treatment. From south to north there is a four-pane window (1 by 4) and three twenty-pane windows (5 by 4). The windows are push-out casements with dark green trim.

The 1968 addition façade at the second story, south to north, has eleven windows. The windows on the addition are five panes high or 40 inches across by 81 inches tall. In each light two-panes are functional--the bottom window slides up to open. They are encased in silver aluminum and are completely distinguishable from the windows used on the original structure. Protruding brick banding connects the 1st and 2nd, 5th and 6th, 6th and 7th, 8th and 9th, and 9th and 10th upper level windows. The first level mirrors the second story for the most part, with a few alterations. From south to north, there are two windows with banding in between, two single doors with vents above each, six windows (with banding between the 1st and 2nd, 2nd and 3rd, 4th and 5th, and 5th and 6th), and two additional single doors.

North(2) Façade

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The north(2) façade is the rear façade of the 1968 addition. The façade contains a single door just to the east of center. Adjacent to the door are two large windows (one on the ground level and one on the second story) directly above each other. There is an additional entrance door on the westerly edge of the north(2) façade with concrete stairs leading to it. A walkway leads from this entrance to the community recreation center that sits to the north of the Center School.

West Façade

The west façade includes both the 1968 addition and the original structure. Reading the façade north to south, the addition has a set of double entrance doors on the northerly edge. The entryway has a concrete stoop in front and a window above on the second level. The second level of the addition contains six windows, three ½ size windows, and an additional three windows. All of these windows are the same as those on the east(2) façade of the 1968 addition (metal aluminum frames). The first level of the addition has three windows, two single doors, six additional windows, and another single door. On both the east(2) façade and this façade, where there are windows on the first level, there are corresponding windows above and the single doors sit directly below upper level windows.

The west façade of the original portion is set back from that of the addition.³ There is a double set of entrance doors with a glass block panel above on the northerly side of this façade. There is an additional window above the glass block panel (on the second level). The second story of this west façade has three twenty-pane windows (5 by 4) and an eight-pane window (2 by 4). The pattern of windows is repeated on the first level. The windows are push-out casements with dark green trim. To the south of the eight-pane windows there are a set of double entrance doors with a large panel of glass block above. The glass block rises from just above the door frame to the second level, ending just below the roof line; it is 18 feet, 8 inches tall and made up of 28 rows of 8-inch x 8-inch glass blocks. Adjacent to the door and glass block is an additional twenty-pane window (5 by 4) on the second level. The first level has a four-pane window (1 by 4), two small half-size windows, and another four-pane (1 by 4) window. On the very southern end of the west façade is a shorter one-story section that has two windows (this one-story section is the westerly projection on the front façade).

Interior Spaces

Ground Floor

The ground floor of the Center School contains both a main hallway and a transverse hallway. The walls in the hallways are composed of a yellow glazed ceramic tile with rounded corners that rises to about seven feet; in places the tiles are topped by a picture molding. Above the tan glazed tile, the walls are painted off-white. The floor is made of brown linoleum tiles with white flecks. Both hallways have their original hanging light fixtures

³ This creates a small wall on the 1968 addition that faces south. This façade will not be discussed in detail – it is a blank wall with no windows or doorways.

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that run down the centerline. The ceiling is a drop ceiling comprised of white acoustic tiles in a metal frame; it was put in during one of the renovations. The hallways contain handsome original oak doors and built-in display cabinets. The hallways have glass block lights at various points, one to each classroom, in the upper portion of the wall. Each light is made of 9 rows of 12 glass bricks across; each glass block is a horizontal 5 x 8 inches, making the total light 104 inches across by 45 inches tall. These panels allow natural light from the outward facing classrooms to penetrate the central corridors. There are five glass block panels on the west side of the main hallway, three on the east side of the main hallway, and one on the north side of the east-west corridor.

The main hallway of the first floor contains classroom spaces. The building is entered at the south end of this hallway. Immediately after entering the building, there is a door to the gymnasium, an information desk, and an additional door to the gym (on the east). On the west, there is an alcove with two offices, the main office, a smaller administrative office that is now used as a gallery for the Greenbelt Museum, and the stairwell to the second floor. The side hallway leads to the east, just after the second gymnasium entrance. Past the side hallway, there is a restroom and three classrooms on the east and three classrooms and an additional stairwell on the west. The 1968 addition connects at the north end of the main hallway.

The main stair hall is handsomely designed. It is all glazed tile on the sides from floor to ceiling; the wall dividing each stage of the stair is finished with rounded glazed tile at the edge, with a poured concrete cap, also rounded. The stair is lighted by a magnificent glass block window (seen on the outside from the west façade) that is 18 feet, 8 inches tall and made up of 28 rows of 8-inch x 8-inch glass blocks. The rear stair hall is all glazed tile, floor to ceiling.

The side hallway runs east-west and gives access to the more "communal" spaces of the building. Rooms presently labeled "kitchen" and "dining hall" (the original home economics and arts and crafts rooms) are on the north side, while the auditorium/gymnasium is on the south side. There are two sets of double entrance doors to the auditorium space from the side hall. The doors in the east-west hallway, which originally contained "specific use rooms", have labels painted on them identifying their use. There is an alcove at the east end of the hallway on the north side. This alcove contains an entrance to one room, labeled the "Media Room". The eastern end of this hallway has a side entrance to the building. A short stairwell of five risers leads to a landing in front of the glass doors. A glass block panel is situated above this entrance.

Second Floor

The second floor of the original structure contains a single north-south hallway, flanked on both sides by classrooms. All of the wooden classroom doors and other fixtures are original to the building. There are two doors at the south end of the hallway. The west side of the hall contains (south to north) a classroom, stairwell, restroom, three classrooms, and an additional stairwell. The east side has a classroom, restroom and three

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additional classrooms (also south to north). The hallway detailing (walls, flooring, lighting) is the same as that which is found on the ground level (see above).

Auditorium/Gymnasium

The auditorium/gymnasium space is two-stories tall with no classrooms adjacent to any side. There are two original wood double entrance doors on both the west and north walls. The storage cabinet on the west wall of the gymnasium has an original wood door as well. The south wall contains the five large façade windows (see south façade description) and the north wall contains three smaller windows that allow for additional daylight to penetrate the space. The walls of the gymnasium are comprised of the same yellow, glazed tile that is found in the hallways up to a height of seven feet. Above the tile, the walls alternate two rows of concrete block with two rows of brick up to the ceiling. The ceiling contains visible trusses matched to the buttresses on either side.

The 6,504 square foot space contains a stage at the eastern end. The stage is elevated three feet above the gym floor. Below the stage there are 20' storage trunks with original wood doors and framing. These trunks house gym equipment, chairs, and other supplies for auditorium use.⁴ The stage has a door on the east wall that leads to the east-west hall and a door on the south side that opens to the outside (south façade). There is also a small backstage area serving the stage.

Classrooms

Many of the classrooms in the original structure contain extensive built-ins: their original oak cabinets, coat closets, and chalkboards. Each classroom was equipped with two chalkboards. Surrounding one were built-in glass bookcases. Below a row of oak storage cabinets stretched the length of the chalkboard and bookcases. A side wall was lined with coat and storage closets with solid oak doors; several were equipped with hooks to hold coats. Baseboards and moldings surrounding the chalkboards were also oak. Sensitive alterations were made when the building was converted to a community center. All of the classrooms contain the original windows, and most have either one or two sets of twenty-paned windows. A commercial-style sash allows for generous amounts of daylight to enter the classroom and permitted various degrees of ventilation.⁵ The classrooms contain a glass block panel at the top of the hallway-side wall and oak doors to the hallway with a single light. Each room now has a drop ceiling of acoustic tiles set in a metal frame and long and narrow drop lighting fixtures, stretching nearly the length of the room.

Addition

⁴ "Schools," *Architectural Forum* 68 (March 1938): 235.

⁵ Ibid, 236.

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The 1968 addition is two stories in height and has the same exterior white brick treatment as the original structure. On the interior, the addition contains the same white panel ceiling material as the original portion of the building. The floor is a brick red linoleum tile, with scattered green tiles. All of the lighting fixtures here are fluorescent and are flush with the ceiling. The walls are off-white painted brick from floor to ceiling. Both the first and second levels of the addition contain a north-south hallway with classroom spaces on either side. These spaces have been considerably altered to allow for a change in use. Many of these rooms now house various offices including the Greenbelt Department of Planning.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☒ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Community Planning

Education

Entertainment/Recreation

Social History

Period of Significance

1937-1987

Significant Dates

1936-1937, 1968, 1987

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Reginald Wadsworth

Douglas Ellington

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☒ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☒ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: University of Maryland, School of
Architecture, Planning & Preservation

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Name of Property

Greenbelt Center Elementary School

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Summary Statement of Significance:

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School, a model progressive school, was constructed as the community focal point of the 1930s federally planned "green town", Greenbelt, Maryland and is therefore significant under Criterion C for the dates 1936-1937 and 1968. As the central historic community institution in Greenbelt, the Center School is also significant under Criterion A for the period 1937-1987, representing the cooperative nature of Greenbelt and the continuity of the "Greenbelt philosophy of life" over the historic community's first 50 years. As the symbol of a continually successful experiment in social, architectural, and planning design, the Center School/Community Center meet the exceptional criteria for designation for a period of significance under 50 years old. The town was part of President Roosevelt's work relief program and was an experiment in American social planning sponsored initially by the Resettlement Administration. The school functioned as both an educational institution during the day and social gathering space during the evening and on weekends. Its placement in relation to the design of the rest of Greenbelt was a key ingredient of its ability to fulfill these functions and exemplified the educational philosophy of Douglas Ellington, one of the architects. He placed the school near the center of town but at the edge of a recreational area and a broad expanse of greenbelt; at the same time, the building was integrally connected to the original commercial center and residential units of Greenbelt via a system of pedestrian linkages. The building is illustrative of the Modern architectural style employed throughout Greenbelt. The exterior, with its flat roof, glass block windows and simple facades exemplifies the International Style forms of the early modern movement in the United States and was one of the earliest examples of modernist architecture and planning in the State of Maryland. Architecturally, the school stands at a transition point in school architecture internationally between European modernist schools and later single-story modernist school designs in the United States. The interior classrooms, hallways, and other spaces utilized innovative design features to help implement a progressive "learn-by-doing" curriculum.

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Resource History and Historic Context:

Greenbelt, Maryland

The Center School was constructed as a part of the 1930s federally planned new town, Greenbelt, Maryland. The Center School was intended to serve as a community focal point, and was accordingly placed adjacent to the town's commercial center. The school was within easy walking distance from all of the original residences and allowed for the school-age children to walk to and from class. One of the primary goals in constructing the Center School was to provide a community gathering space that would foster the ideals of social cooperation embodied in the Greenbelt project. According to architect Douglas Ellington, the building was designed "to draw community activities into closer contact with child education by combining the community hall with the grade school in one building. This not only saved the cost of an extra building but also made possible greater social unity."⁶ On the other hand, the school's placement reflected another important tenet of progressive educational thinking in the 1930s and 1940s: locating the school on the edge of a central park or recreation ground that could serve as a resource for physical and educational activities. As the Superintendent of Schools in Montgomery County Edwin W. Broome argued in 1941, "Adequate size sites, not necessarily level tracts, are of importance. The trees, streams, and uneven terrain may be of greatest service. Conservation of soil, school gardening, landscaping, and the like, may appropriately become direct and real experiences in the resources of the school site. Experimentation with soil and plants under natural conditions results in valuable first-hand facts in science. Well-selected sites may also provide opportunities for play, picnics, outdoor dramatics, rhythmic interpretations and other similar activities of value."⁷ Maryland school officials had a clear view of what new concepts they wanted to implement.⁸ All of these kinds of activities were integrated into the progressive curriculum at the Center School during the period of federal ownership of Greenbelt, 1937 to 1953.

Greenbelt was an experiment in urban and social planning carried on by the Resettlement Administration of the Federal Government under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Rexford Guy Tugwell was the administrator of the Resettlement Administration and was a key player in the development of the green towns. Greenbelt was the first of three federally planned communities (the other two were Greenhills, Ohio and Greendale, Wisconsin). The goal of these new towns was threefold: (1) to employ large numbers of skilled laborers primarily from the construction industry as part of the federal work relief program; (2) to provide housing for middle-income, working class families outside of the congested urban core; and (3) to provide a model for

⁶ Douglas Ellington, quoted in Leta Mach, "Constructing the Town of Greenbelt," in Mary Lou Williamson, ed., *Greenbelt: History of a New Town, 1937-1987* (City of Greenbelt, 1997), 35.

⁷ Edwin W. Broome, "A New Departure in Elementary School Planning and its Determining Philosophy," *The American School and University* 14 (1941), 42. This same principal was emphasized in N.L. Engelhardt & N. L. Engelhardt, Jr., *Planning the Community School* (New York: Book Company, 1940), 169.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 40-46.

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"improved" urban planning.⁹ The basic program for the development of the green towns, as outlined by the Resettlement Administration, was "to obtain a large tract of land, and thus avoid the complications ordinarily due to diverse ownerships; in this tract to create a community, protected by an encircling green belt; the community to be designed primarily for families of modest income, and arranged and managed so as to encourage a family and community life." The overall concept for the green town program emerged from the utopian garden city principles that were developed in England in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰ In addition, the idea for Greenbelt embodied several progressive design ideas generated by planners, e.g. Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, and Clarence Perry, associated with the affordable housing experiments of Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, NY, and Radburn, New Jersey: attached housing clustered around a superblock, reversed plans where kitchens face the street and living areas face a landscaped interior park, pedestrian pathways and underpasses to separate pedestrian from vehicular traffic, and the Neighborhood Unit Plan idea, wherein the community centered on a school, shopping, and community facilities which were walking distance for every household. Greenbelt was also planned as a child-centered community and provided with abundant recreational facilities and programs as well as a progressive school curriculum that included outdoor education in nature and ecology.

President Roosevelt created the Resettlement Administration through Executive Order 7027 on April 30, 1935 as a part of his New Deal program.¹¹ The Land Policy Section of the Land Program of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration started the optioning for land on which to construct the new towns in the spring of 1935. This action was then taken over by the Legal Division of The Land Program, which later became the Land Section of the Suburban Resettlement Division. Monies were subsequently allocated to the Suburban Resettlement Division for the construction of the planned suburban communities on September 13, 1935.¹² Rexford Guy Tugwell was initially in charge of the Greenbelt project. Tugwell later became the director of the Resettlement Administration.

Groundbreaking for the new town of Greenbelt began on October 12, 1935. The first stage of construction included the digging of the lake, 217 acres for residential, public buildings and commercial space, 641 acres for parks and recreation, 150 acres of allotment gardens, and 100 acres of farms. The original town of Greenbelt, as constructed in the 1930s included 885 dwelling units, a commercial center, the elementary school/community center, and an extensive network of parks, greenways and pedestrian paths. A high school (now the Greenbelt Middle School) was also constructed with the project, but was located 1.5 miles outside of the town to allow easy accessibility from other communities. The program for the Greenbelt New Towns required that a combination school/community center be located in the center of each town. The 885 dwelling units broke

⁹ "A Planned Community Appraised," *Architectural Forum* 72 (January 1940): 62.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Historic Landmark Nomination: Greenbelt, Maryland, Historic District* (March 1996), by Elizabeth Jo Lampl, (Washington, D.C.: 1996), 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹² U.S. Resettlement Administration, *Greenbelt Towns: A Demonstration in Suburban Planning, Basic Program*, (Washington, D.C.: September 1936), no page.

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down into 574 attached townhouses, 306 apartments, and five single family detached houses.¹³ Greenbelt's location was chosen due to both the availability of land (approximately 12,189 acres) next to the National Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville and its close proximity, around 13 miles, to Washington, D.C. Greenbelt is now located just east of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, within close proximity to Interstate 495, the D.C. beltway. The first residents moved into Greenbelt on September 30, 1937.

Greenbelt's residential buildings were arranged in courts along a double crescent street pattern. The pedestrian walkways throughout the community linked the residential blocks together and with the communal sites such as the elementary school, commercial center, and other recreation facilities.¹⁴ These paths went through underpasses so as to completely separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic. When the town opened, a cooperative relationship with Prince George's County was established. The county operated both the elementary and high school, and provided county police protection, jails, and courts.¹⁵

The planning and construction of Greenbelt proved to be one of the largest work relief programs in the nation, employing over 13,000 people. The city was thought to embody significant progressive social concepts and the designers wished to reflect this ideal in the architecture throughout the community. Laurence Coffin's reflection on the development of Greenbelt succinctly defines this relationship when he states, "Greenbelt's purpose was to project the future, and the choice of architecture was modern." At the time of construction this architecture was referred to as functional and contemporary.

In 1953, the federal government sold the City of Greenbelt, save for a 1.5 square mile area that is now the Greenbelt Regional Park.¹⁶ On February 18, 1997 Greenbelt was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) by the Secretary of the Interior in honor of the town's 60th anniversary, with the Center School as a contributing resource. The NHL nomination form includes a detailed chronology of major land transfers and sequence of development for Greenbelt, as well as an extensive bibliography of sources relating to the town.

Relation to Other Properties of its Type in the Region

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School was an innovative, modern school design that, along with a handful of other buildings in the state, spearheaded the widespread use of modern architecture for public schools in Maryland. Although the notion of "region" here should generally refer to public school construction in the Washington, DC suburban communities of Montgomery and Prince George's County, it is worth discussing general movements in school design in Maryland. For functional and economic reasons, schools continually

¹³ Laurence E. Coffin and Beatriz de Winthuysen Coffin, "Greenbelt: A Maryland 'New Town' Turns 50," *Landscape Architecture* 78 no. 4 (June 1988): 49.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "A Planned Community Appraised," *Architectural Forum* 72 (January 1940): 63.

¹⁶ Laurence E. Coffin and Beatriz de Winthuysen Coffin, "Greenbelt: A Maryland 'New Town' Turns 50," *Landscape Architecture* 78 no. 4 (June 1988): 49.

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necessitated low-maintenance, practical, and simple structures. During the Ritchie administration (1920-35), innovative school design and construction became a key part of the Governor's modernization campaign. Albert S. Cook, the superintendent for the state from 1922 to 1942, oversaw many improvements to public school designs.¹⁷ During the 1930s and early 1940s, when modern influences were first seen in the state of Maryland, modern elements were generally concentrated on the plans and interior finishes of schools. Classrooms at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Bethesda (1941), for example, permitted the appropriate combination of diffused and direct light and ventilation and featured built-in cupboards under the chalkboard and a wall of storage closets, similar to the classrooms in the Center School. The Rockville High School (Cutler & Burket, c. 1940) was imaginatively planned to provide modern "laboratories" for the sciences (biology, horticulture, and general sciences) and the arts (art and stagecraft) as well as an occupational library, a bold circular assembly room, and special spaces for parent-teacher and student-faculty conferences.¹⁸ The Patterson Park Middle School (Wyatt and Nolting, c.1933) in Baltimore City was one of the first public schools to utilize a modern exterior design. The building had an industrial looking façade with large areas of steel sash windows. Much larger than the Center School at eight stories, it encompassed an entire city block. Detailing in the auditorium, library, and cafeteria was beautifully finished and the School included a state of the art heating plant.¹⁹

Among local architects, Rhees E. Burket stood out for his bold modern designs and his understanding of how architects could meet the needs of public schools for modern physical plants that served an evolving curriculum, protected the physical health of children, and met the community's social and economic requirements. Burket's Kensington Junior High School, constructed in Montgomery County in 1937, exhibited modern materials and clean, simple lines to produce a handsome, functional, and entirely up-to-date building. Kensington High's modern features are worth noting in detail, particularly as they parallel and even exceed those of the Center School. Most striking in the exterior design is the extensive use of glass block in the nearly continuous classroom fenestration on both the first and second floors. Burket advocated glass block above a vision strip of clear windows that could be opened for ventilation for its delivery of diffused light into classrooms and elimination of glare thought to be potentially harmful to young eyes. The resulting exterior design also projected the efficient and orderly image that Burket felt appropriate for schools as training grounds for business careers. In his writings, Burket strongly discouraged the use of period styles for new school construction on several grounds. "Not only is the use of modern improved materials restricted by the use of predetermined style, but proper and economical arrangement of plan functions or parts is greatly hampered." A third feature of note at Kensington High was the flexible and functional design of spaces, especially multiple

¹⁷ Dorothy M. Brown, "Maryland Between the Wars," in Richard Walsh and William Lloyd Fox (eds.), *Maryland. A History*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Maryland Historical Society, 1983), 724-725.

¹⁸ Nickolaus L. Engelhardt & Nickolaus L. Englehardt, Jr., *Planning the Community School*, (New York: The Book Company, 1940, 161.

¹⁹ Amber Milwee and David J. Downs, "Baltimore Schools Grow Up," Seminar Paper, Professor Gournay, (University of Maryland: 2001).

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use spaces that could accommodate adult community activities as well as children's learning activities.²⁰ A few other schools employed similar features during the late 1930s and early 1940s. At Montgomery Blair High School, Burket designed a home economics department that community members could use after school hours for cooking, sewing, homemaking, and social activities. At Takoma Park Junior High, designed by Frank G. Pierson and A. Hamilton Wilson (c. 1940), a social hall with an adjacent kitchen at one end and boys and girls locker rooms at the other end, provided the ultimate multi-use room with stage for the community.

In the late 1940s, as the residential population in Maryland skyrocketed, public school construction escalated. This increased demand for new schools and additions to existing schools, a state interest in updating school architecture, and architects' increasing turn toward modernist solutions for economic, functional, and simple school construction, spurred the use of modern designs for many of these new buildings. Beginning in 1949 the state authorized \$70 million for new school construction. From 1945 to 1951, 208 public schools were built or substantially added on to.²¹ In the 1950s, with continued population growth, the public school population increased 58%. As a result, from 1958 to 1965, the state allocated an additional \$84.8 million for elementary and secondary school construction.²² The mid-century, rapid growth in population and the resulting school construction came just as the public acceptance of modern architecture took hold in Maryland. Most of the mid-century suburban schools were either one- or two-stories with horizontal streamlined profiles and flat roofs. Taller massing was generally employed for cafeteria/auditorium/gymnasium spaces and the buildings were often clustered around closed or open courtyard spaces. The exterior finishes continued to utilize red brick material, but with a modern motif. The use of built-in cabinetry appropriately scaled to the age of students was also commonly used.

Other significant modern public schools in the Washington, D.C. suburbs were constructed during this mid-century period. The Greenbelt Center Elementary School still stands out as a benchmark in modern public school design, and there are elements of its design that become visible in later schools. The Hillandale Elementary School in Montgomery County by McLeod & Ferrara (1952-55) is a minimalist structure with cinder block and brick bearing walls. The classrooms include built-in wood storage cabinets, that while generally popular, are reminiscent of those used at the Center School. The Ayrilawn Elementary School, also in Montgomery County (c.1961), is an L-shaped building that was designed to share its facility with the Montgomery County Recreational Department of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. This shared use concept also dates back to the original combined school/neighborhood center function of the Center School and Kensington High. The Travilah Elementary School in Montgomery County, by Stanley H. Arthur (c. 1960), also included an all-purpose room similar to the Center School gymnasium that multi-functioned as an assembly area, cafeteria, and gymnasium for the students, as well as a community

²⁰ Rhees E. Burket, "Suburban School Building After the War," *American School and University* 15 (1942): 17-21; quotation p. 20. A report by Alice Barrows of the Office of Education of the Federal Security Agency covering school buildings erected with PWA aid and completed before 1939 noted the important new usage of auditoriums as "community centers of the neighborhood."

²¹ George Calcott, *Maryland and America, 1940-1980*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 105.

²² *Ibid.*, 142

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meeting hall for stage performances, community dances, and other events. The school/community centers constructed in Baden and at Takoma Park Junior High School (Frank G. Pierson and A. Hamilton Wilson, c. 1940) also illustrate this multi-purpose concept.²³ The former building demonstrates the long-evolving trend toward structural and architectural flexibility in public school design. It utilized long span structural systems and movable partitions.

Background Information on Events and Development of the Property

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School was, as previously stated, constructed as the centerpiece and focal point of historic Greenbelt, Maryland. The building was constructed as part of the original portion of Greenbelt, and was completed in 1937. The architects for the school were Reginald Wadsworth and Douglas Ellington, the same architects as for the Greenbelt project as a whole. The town planner for Greenbelt was Hale Walker, while the principal engineer was Harold Bursley. Artist Lenore Thomas was commissioned by the WPA to create bas-relief panels along the front façade that illustrated the preamble to the United States Constitution. The Resettlement Administration and Farm Security Administration (which assumed management of Greenbelt in 1937) intended that the Center School fulfill the dual purpose of providing a social and educational center for the town. It included rooms for meetings, entertainment, a library, and a gymnasium and was situated adjacent to community recreation, greenbelt, and swimming areas.²⁴ The original plan for the building allowed for an addition to be made to the west of the original structure.²⁵ The construction of the school, in addition to being required by the federal program, was necessary due to the population increase caused by the amount of housing that was constructed in Greenbelt. One of the initial, subtle purposes of the school was to help control the growth rate in the town. If any violation in the allowable amount of housing occurred, the school would not be able to accommodate the subsequent population increase.

The Center School officially opened in October 1937 with seven teachers and twenty-four students. Within a few months all of the original 885 dwelling units were occupied, and the enrollment neared 400. The school was designed to accommodate 450 children, a large school according to contemporary standards. From its opening through the 1941-1942 school year, the enrollment averaged between 400 and 450 students. In 1942, the federal government constructed defense worker housing in undeveloped portions of Greenbelt. This housing was intended for military personnel and civilians that worked for either the Army or the Navy. This large influx of new residents caused the population of Greenbelt to increase and the enrollment at the Center School to nearly double. As a result, a second elementary school, the North End School, opened in 1943.²⁶ It was torn down in 1992 to make way for the new Greenbelt Elementary School (1993), in an arrangement that

²³ Engelhardt & Engelhardt, *Planning the Community School* (1940), 61.

²⁴ U.S. Resettlement Administration, *Greenbelt Towns*, (Washington, D.C.: 1936), no page.

²⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Historic Landmark Nomination: Greenbelt, Maryland, Historic District* (March 1996), by Elizabeth Joey Lampl, (Washington, D.C.: 1996), 13.

²⁶ Kavanagh, Marybeth, *The History, Social Use, and Meaning of the Greenbelt Center School, 1937-1943*, Masters Thesis, (University of Maryland, 2000), 63.

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included the decision to renovate the Center School and dedicate it solely as a community center.²⁷

The original decision to combine the functions of an elementary school and a community social center occurred for several reasons. Contemporary progressive planning ideals, based partly on Clarence Perry's Neighborhood Unit Plan, conceptualized the community school as a central anchor for the neighborhood.²⁸ Contemporary educational theory advocated the advantages of combining educational and community social functions as well.²⁹ In addition, Greenbelt's planners were anxious to reduce the construction and maintenance costs for the project. Because the project was constructed by the federal government and experienced cost overruns due to its function of putting persons in the constructions trades back to work, public outcry led to budget constraints.³⁰ The original building had thirteen classrooms that served kindergarten and elementary school classes during the weekdays as well as the necessary offices and support spaces. The center housed various community activities including religious services, movies, dances, town fairs, political meetings, adult education and craft classes at night and on the weekends. During the early years of the community, the building housed the town hall, Citizen's Association, and other community organizations. The Center School provided for the first religious gathering space in Greenbelt with Protestant services on Sundays and Jewish services on Friday nights.³¹ In addition, the Center School was home to Greenbelt's adult education program. In 1938, the Education Committee of the Greenbelt Citizen Association formed the Adult Education Department. Offerings included evening classes in home economics, nutrition, pottery, typing, public speaking and woodworking for all Greenbelt residents over the age of sixteen. The classes cost only a \$1 registration fee.³² The Recreation Department for Greenbelt was also located within the Center School and offered physical education classes, games, and team sports for all Greenbelt residents.

The form of the building was a result of the need to accommodate this variety of uses. At the time of planning and construction, the State of Maryland and local authorities thought that it was inequitable, if not illegal, to force the Prince George's County school district to maintain the community facilities housed within the building. These were amenities not provided at other schools within the county. The resulting L-shape of the building thus separated the traditional school uses (classrooms, health room, and principal's office) from the uses extended more broadly to the community (gymnasium, stage, homemaking room, and arts and crafts shop). These community amenities were in the "community activity wing" and it was the intention that the community would be responsible for the maintenance of this wing instead of the school board.³³

²⁷ James K. Giese, "Greenbelt: The Sixth Decade, 1987-1997," in Williamson, ed., *Greenbelt: History of a New Town, 1937-1987* (1997 edition), 294-298.

²⁸ Clarence A. Perry, *New York School Centers and Their Community Policy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1931).

²⁹ Engelhardt & Engelhardt, *Planning the Community School*, pp. 148, 61, 160-161.

³⁰ "Schools," *Architectural Forum* 68 (March 1938): 235.

³¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic American Buildings Survey: Greenbelt Community Building*, (Washington, D.C.): 4.

³² Kavanagh, Marybeth, *The History, Social Use, and Meaning of the Greenbelt Center School, 1937-1943*, Masters Thesis, (University of Maryland, 2000), 51-52.

³³ *Ibid*, 49.

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The Center School was planned to be located within one half mile of all of the original residential units in Greenbelt. This allowed for easy accessibility by the residents, including the students who walked to school.³⁴ The main facilities in the building that served a dual purpose were the auditorium/gymnasium, library, homemaking room, and the wood shop. All of the classrooms included built-in wardrobes for children and teachers, chalkboards, tackboards, and storage space for books and accessories. Following the experimental nature of Greenbelt, the Center School was constructed with a variety of new materials including copper fittings for the water pipes, brass plumbing, and glass block windows.

Changes in Ownership and Building Alterations

The federal government owned the Center Elementary School until 1953, when it was turned over to the City of Greenbelt at the time when the federal government sold the planned community to private interests. The original federal agency in charge of the school was the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the successor to the Resettlement Administration. The Federal Public Housing Administration took control of Greenbelt during the 1943-1944 school year. The building had been continually leased to the Prince George's County Board of Education for operational purposes.³⁵ In 1959, the building was sold to the Board of Education for \$260,000.³⁶ Until 1959, the building had housed the elementary school, community center, and Greenbelt Library. It continued to provide space for the library until 1971, and the city paid rent to Prince George's County to continue the building's function as a community center.³⁷ In 1968, the Board of Education constructed a compatible, but distinguishable, addition to the rear (north side) of the structure.³⁸

In 1983, the Board of Education wanted to demolish the Center School due to a growing population and insufficient space in the 46-year old structure. As a result, the Art Deco Society of Washington and the City of Greenbelt were successful in designating the structure a county historic site with the Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission. Subsequently, the building was also included on the county's Historic Sites and Districts Plan.³⁹ The 1983 nomination focused primarily on the bas-relief panels on the front façade and other façade elements of the 1937 structure.

The building was threatened by the Board of Education again in 1988. This time, the Board wanted to expand

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, 2.

³⁶ "Greenbelt Sells Building," *Washington Post*, (29 July 1959).

³⁷ Maryland Historical Trust, *State Historic Sites Inventory Form: Greenbelt Community Building* (November 1983), by Tracy Dillard and Richard Striner, (Annapolis, 1983): no page.

³⁸ Recall that the original plans provided for an addition to the west of the building. The Board of Education chose not to follow this plan. The west side of the building now houses the Greenbelt Library and parking areas.

³⁹ Deborah Sheiman Shprentz, "Greenbelt, Maryland: Preservation of a Historic Planned Community," *Cultural Resource Management* 9 (1999): 54; Giese, "Greenbelt: The Sixth Decade, 1987-1997," in Williamson, ed., *Greenbelt: History of a New Town, 1937-1987*, 294-95, 298.

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the school and keep only the front façade. As a result, the City of Greenbelt coordinated a land swap with the County. This allowed for the Board of Education to construct a new elementary school outside the historic district (on the site of the North End School), while the city took ownership over the historic structure. The Center Elementary School was converted to a full-time community center and was renamed the Greenbelt Community Center in 1991. After the city took over operation of the building, it went through a sensitive renovation. The building now includes space for a full-time museum exhibit, nursery school, senior center, café, sports and arts programs, civic assemblies, and studio spaces for artists.⁴⁰ All of these uses are housed in former classrooms and/or office spaces. The building is open for public use by the community every day of the year and is heavily used. Throughout the 66 years of Greenbelt, the Center School has continually functioned as a focal point and meeting place for residents of the city. It is significant in that it embodies the cooperative nature of Greenbelt and the continuity of that "Greenbelt philosophy of life" over time.⁴¹

Biographical Information on Persons Associated with the Property

Reginald Wadsworth (1885-1981)

Reginald Jeffrey Wadsworth, one of the two main architects assigned to the Greenbelt project was born in Montreal, Canada. There, he apprenticed with the firms Brown & Miller from 1903-1904 and Ross & MacDonald from 1905-1908. He received his Certificate of Proficiency in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1910. In 1911 he worked as an assistant instructor in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Following his work as an instructor, he worked in his own firm, Huot, Wadsworth & Henderson from 1912 to 1913 and then Wadsworth & Henderson from 1914 to 1915, both in Montreal. Wadsworth returned to Philadelphia in 1915, however, to work as chief draftsman for the firm of Mellor & Meigs, continuing his career at the firm of Bissel & Sinkler (1919-1931) where he started as a chief draftsman and was later promoted to partner in the firm.⁴² While he lived in Philadelphia, Wadsworth was a member of the T-Square Club. There he received the 1920 medal for the Club Sketch Problem. He joined the American Institute of Architects in 1920 and became an active member of the Washington Chapter when he moved to Washington, D.C.⁴³

Wadsworth moved to Washington, D.C. in 1934 where he worked as a principal architect for the U.S. Housing Authority from 1934-1952.⁴⁴ He became involved in the Greenbelt project in 1936. Wadsworth was involved in all aspects of the architectural design for the town, including residential units, the commercial center, and the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The Greenbelt philosophy of life was spelled out in Volume 1, issue 1 of the *Greenbelt Co-operator*, the weekly cooperative newspaper that still, under the current name of *Greenbelt News Review*, continues to serve the community. (reproduced copy of *Greenbelt Co-operator*, collection of Greenbelt Museum).

⁴² "Wadsworth, Reginald Jeffrey (1885-1981)," In Philadelphia Architects and Buildings [database on-line], (Philadelphia, Pa: [cited 08 October 2002]).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ American Architects Directory 1970 (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1970).

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Center Elementary School. He continued to live in Washington, D.C. and work in architecture until 1952.⁴⁵
Douglas Ellington (1886-1960)

Douglas Ellington was the second of the two primary architects responsible for the Greenbelt project. He was born in Clayton, North Carolina, and received his education at the Randolph-Macon College, the Drexel Institute, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris where was the first American southerner to win the Paris Prize (awarded for structural design) and was the first American winner of the Rougevin Prize (awarded for decorative architecture).⁴⁶ He was a skilled watercolorist and his paintings were shown at the Intercolonial Exhibition in Paris. During his career he taught architectural design at Drexel Institute, Columbia University, and the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh.⁴⁷ When American entered WWI, Ellington worked for the Navy and supervised the development of camouflage for ships. After the war, he returned to Pittsburgh and opened his own practice, but in 1925, he moved his practice to Asheville, North Carolina.⁴⁸

Ellington primarily worked in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Mississippi, Pennsylvania and Florida, although his work can also be found in a number of other states throughout the country. He is best known for the Lee Edwards High School, the City Building, and his own residence – all in Asheville, North Carolina, and for distinctive works in the art deco style. In 1928, Ellington published an article in the *Architectural Record* regarding the architecture in Asheville entitled, "The Architecture of the City Building, Asheville, North Carolina." Other notable commissions include the Greenbelt project, the restoration of the Old Dock Street Theater in Charleston, renovations and additions for a number of historic churches in Virginia and North Carolina, and various housing developments in Charleston.⁴⁹ His work was regularly published in *Architectural Record*.⁵⁰ Ellington eventually alternated between residences in Charleston for most of the year and Asheville during the summer months, continuing to practice in both places.

Rexford Guy Tugwell (1891 – 1979)

Rexford Guy Tugwell was born and raised in Chautauqua County, New York. He studied at the University of Pennsylvania, earning a Bachelor of Science in 1915 and his Ph.D. in economics at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce in 1922. Tugwell taught economics at the University of Pennsylvania from 1915-1917,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Biography: Douglas Ellington, Architect," In D.H. Ramsey Library & Asheville Art Museum & Pack Library [database on-line], (Asheville, Nc: [cited 08 October 2002]).

⁴⁸ Ibid; Oracle Think Quest Educational Center: "Douglas Ellington's Art Deco designs of Asheville, North Carolina," <http://library.thinkquest.org/J0112120/biography.htm>

⁴⁹ "Biography: Douglas Ellington, Architect," In D.H. Ramsey Library & Asheville Art Museum & Pack Library [database on-line], (Asheville, Nc: [cited 08 October 2002]).

⁵⁰ "Bibliography: Douglas Ellington and Art Deco," D.H. Ramsey Library & Asheville Art Museum (http://ddl.library.appstate.edu/regional_history/architecture/ellington/Bibliography.htm), cited 6-8-04.

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at the University of Washington from 1917-1918, and at Columbia University from 1920-1937.⁵¹

Tugwell became involved in FDR's presidential campaign in 1932, serving as his economic policy advisor and a member of his "Brain Trust". In 1933, President Roosevelt appointed Tugwell to the position of Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, and promoted him to Undersecretary of Agriculture in 1934. While in this position, Tugwell helped draw up the Agricultural Adjustment Act. In 1935, he became the head of the newly formed Resettlement Administration. While at this position, he worked on a number of New Deal programs, including tax reform, public works relief, and the federally planned communities, where he administered Arthurdale, Virginia.⁵² Tugwell was instrumental in the creation and development of the Greenbelt Towns program.⁵³

In 1938, Tugwell left the federal government, although he continued to work in city planning, government, and academia. He was appointed chairman of the New York City Planning Commission from 1938-40 and returned to the Roosevelt administration as Governor of Puerto Rico from 1942-46. Thereafter he returned to his academic career, teaching at the University of Chicago from 1946-1957. He returned to Maryland in the late 1950s while conducting research at the Library of Congress, and lived briefly in Greenbelt. He became a senior fellow of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California beginning in 1966.⁵⁴

A number of biographies have been published about Tugwell including Bernard Sternsher's *Rexford Tugwell and the New Deal* (1964), and Charles Goodsell's *Administration of a Revolution: Executive Reform in Puerto Rico Under Governor Tugwell, 1941-1946* (1965). In addition, Tugwell published two autobiographical works, *The Diary of Rexford G. Tugwell: The New Deal, 1933-1935* (edited by Michael Vincent Namorato and published in 1992) and *To the Lesser Heights of Morningside: A Memoir* (1982). During his active career, Tugwell published two notable articles: "The Fourth Power" *Planning and Civic Comment* 5 no.2 (Apr-June 1939) and "Planning in New York City" *Planners' Journal* 5 (Apr-June 1940). Rexford Guy Tugwell's papers are housed at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York.

Hale Walker (1891-1967)

Hale Walker was the chief town planner for the Greenbelt project. His urban planning career began in 1920 when he was chosen to participate in the Harvard Reconstruction Unit, a group of architects, engineers, and economists who aided the rebuilding of Europe after WWI under Harvard's sponsorship. Walker chose to remain in Europe for a time in the 1920s where he studied with French planner Jacques Greber, working with

⁵¹ "Rexford Guy Tugwell," *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Sixth Edition. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁵² "Rexford Guy Tugwell, 1891-1979," The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Website, <http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/abouteleonor/q-and-a/glossary/tugwell-rexford.htm> (visited 6-9-04).

⁵³ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic American Buildings Survey: Greenbelt Community Building*, (Washington, D.C.): 3.

⁵⁴ "Rexford Guy Tugwell, 1891-1979," The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Website; "Rexford Guy Tugwell" *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=75629>>[Accessed June 8, 2004].

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Greber on several planned small French villages.⁵⁵ When he returned to the U.S., he taught part time at Harvard and worked as an associate in John Nolen's firm. Nolen's (1869-1937) office designed a number of "new towns" including Kingsport, Tennessee; Mariemont, Ohio; and Venice, Florida. Prior to working on the Greenbelt project, Walker collaborated with Nolen on the landscaping plan for Marston House and Gardens in San Diego (c.1927).⁵⁶

In 1930, Walker joined the Maryland State Planning Commission. He became the chief planner for Greenbelt in 1935 under the Resettlement Administration. Subsequently, he worked with federal housing agencies that were predecessors to HUD. During WWII, Walker worked on war housing in Cleveland. He served with the Public Housing Administration in Detroit, was a planner for the Housing and Home Finance Agency in Washington and in their Philadelphia regional office, and he worked on the first campus master plan for the Ohio State University in association with Howard Dwight Smith in 1948. Walker was a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and a member of the American Institute of Planners.⁵⁷

Harold Bursley (1891-1967)

Harold Bursley is cited as the principal engineer for Greenbelt, although he was professionally trained as a landscape architect. He was born in New York and spent most of his career working as an associate and eventually successor of Earle Sumner Draper in Charlotte, North Carolina. He took over this office in 1933 upon Draper's death and headed it until his own passing.⁵⁸ He is best known for his collaborative work on the Greenbelt project. His other prominent work was the Piedmont Courts (c.1940), Charlotte's first public housing project. Bursley heavily influenced the design. He imitated Greenbelt's design with the use of long rows of townhouse style apartments that were situated to allow for interior play areas and walkways that were separate from the streets. Bursley was a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The majority of his work is found in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Lenore Thomas (1909-1988)

Lenore Thomas was an artists specializing in sculpture, printmaking, and poetry. She grew up in Chicago and was educated at the Chicago Art Institute, but she was largely self-taught. During the early 1930s, she assisted Ben Shahn in designing public art for a planned community in Roosevelt, New Jersey. During the Depression, she came to Washington, D.C. to work for the Works Projects Administration. While a WPA employee, she was commissioned in 1937 to design the bas relief panels for the front façade of the Center Elementary School.

⁵⁵ Obituary, *Journal of Housing* 24 (7), August 1967, 365.

⁵⁶ Vonn-Marie May, "The Marston Garden: The Southwest Interprets English Romantic," *Journal of San Diego History* 36 (Spr/Sum 1990).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Thomas W. Hanchett, "Charlotte's Neighborhood Planning Tradition," www.cmhpf.org/neighborhoods/NeighPlan.html, accessed 6-8-04.

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The six panels show images of workers and depict the several phrases from the preamble to the United States Constitution.⁵⁹ The artist sculpted the panels on site; they are reminiscent of Paul Cret's Folger Shakespeare Library in downtown Washington, D.C.⁶⁰ Thomas also designed a number of other public art projects, including the mother and child sculpture in the central plaza of Roosevelt Center in Greenbelt.

Thomas's sculptures focused primarily on human figures; she preferred to work in stone. Her prints depicted people in various natural surroundings. Her work was exhibited at the Whitney and Metropolitan Museums in New York City, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery, and in several private galleries in Washington, D.C. While working on the Greenbelt sculptures, she resided with her husband in Accokeek, MD, where she lived for 41 years. Toward the end of her life, she moved to Blue Hill, Maine, in 1968 and taught at the Haystack School of Crafts in Maine on Deer Isle.⁶¹

The Importance of the Property in Architectural History

The Greenbelt Center School was a progressive school building in comparison with conventional American school designs of the 1930s. Architecturally, it is a transitional work, bridging the gap between European and American modernist schools. European architects pioneered many ideas for modern school design. During the 1920s they turned to modernism as more adaptable for properly accommodating changing educational requirements. The use of modern architecture allowed for the best solution to new programs at an affordable cost. To minimize the cost of construction, exterior facades exhibited simple lines and rooms were designed to accommodate multiple uses, such as the combining of gymnasiums, auditoriums, and social halls. Schools were integrated more closely with housing, as at Vienna's Karl Marx Hof (Karl Ehn, 1930), which provided a centrally located kindergarten. European architects were especially progressive in insisting that educational spaces be well lighted and designed to take advantage of the site and the out of doors. Schools were carefully oriented to ensure that the maximum amount of air and natural light would penetrate classroom spaces.⁶² To achieve this, large amounts of glass were incorporated in the design with long horizontal lines of corridor windows and stair towers comprised of mainly metal and glass. Architects created special outdoor play and activity spaces, such as the semicircular wing of the kindergarten at Gennevilliers France (F. Dumail, c. 1935), which could be opened to provide complete integration of indoor and outdoor play, or the roof garden for the school at Alfortville, France (M. G. Gautier, c. 1935) that provided tables with parasols for children eating lunch. The elementary double school at Charlottenburg-Nord in Germany (c. 1933-34) featured a zigzag pattern of classrooms in order to provide bilateral lighting. An even bolder design was the Johannes Duiker's modern Freiluft Volksschule in Amsterdam (1928-30), a stack of classrooms four stories high that opened onto a

⁵⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁰ Deborah Sheiman Shprentz, "Greenbelt, Maryland: Preservation of a Historic Planned Community," *Cultural Resource Management* 9 (1999): 54.

⁶¹ Biographical information on Lenore Thomas from notebook accompanying a permanent display of her sculpture in the Greenbelt Community Center (accessed 12-03) and <<http://umain.edu/wic/both/hartman/winners87.html>> (accessed Dec. 2003).

⁶² Frederick Woodbridge, "Ideas from European Schools," *Architectural Forum* (Dec. 1931): 725.

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veranda or a deck.⁶³

These design principles soon found their way to the United States; some, but not all were exemplified in the design of the Greenbelt Center School. Perhaps the first modernist school in America was the Oak Lane Country Day School, designed by Howe & Lescaze in Oak Lane, Philadelphia (c. 1929). A sleek Moderne building that juxtaposed industrial windows in a stark concrete façade, the school was furnished with ultra modern equipment and was ahead of its time. In California, Richard Neutra designed an experimental elementary school for the Los Angeles School Board in 1934. It featured bilateral lighting and ventilation and, following Duiker's open air school in Amsterdam, classrooms with sliding glass walls that opened onto garden patios.⁶⁴ The Fowler Elementary School in Fowler, California, went even further in 1939: it included an outdoor auditorium and covered open air eating space in addition to indoor/outdoor classrooms.

The Crow Island Elementary School, an exquisite design in Winnetka, Illinois (1940) by Eliel and Eero Saarinen (Perkins, Wheeler & Will, Associate Architects), adapted many of these same features to a modern climate while also pioneering what would become a dominant preference for schools of a single story.⁶⁵ In some parts of the country, modern motifs had begun to be used, especially for high schools, such as the Patterson Park School (Wyatt & Nolting, c. 1933) in Baltimore and the Lamar Senior High School (John F. Staub and Kenneth Franzheim, 1937) in Houston, both of which featured an industrial-looking façade reminiscent of the Bauhaus.⁶⁶

The use of modern architecture on school buildings was generally less prominent on the eastern seaboard and in Maryland in the 1930s. Thus, many elements of the Center School's design distinguish it from other school buildings of its time in the region. It is a path breaking building in the local context, consequently, but only a transitional building in the national and international contexts of progressive school design. On the one hand, Center School embodies clean, modern lines, accentuated by the use of painted white brick on the exterior in a state in which red brick was the construction material of choice. It boasted extremely well designed classroom lighting, combining bilateral daylight with incandescent lighting shielded by translucent globes to soften the effect. However, it was a two-story building at a time when the most progressive architects in the United States were calling for single-story schools. Although it possessed wide expanses of windows, all of which could be opened to ventilate classrooms, and was situated adjacent to a park and woodlands, it did not incorporate the concept of classrooms completely open to the out-of-doors. The rooms were amply furnished with built-in cabinets and closets, but the furniture remained at the periphery of the spaces and, except for the coat closets, was not scaled for children. A few features used in the Center School were typical of educational buildings in both the United States and abroad. The tan glazed tiles on the interior hallways was a common element and can

⁶³ Thomas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture: A Biography and History* (New York: Oxford, 1982), 162.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Heinrich H. Waechter and Elizabeth Waechter, *Schools for the Very Young* (F. W. Dodge Corporation, 1951), 54-56.

⁶⁶ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas, 1895-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 215.

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be found in the educational buildings at the University of Montreal in Canada (designed 1927, constructed in the 1940s) and in a number of European school buildings constructed prior to the Center School.

The Center School was designed and constructed by the Resettlement Administration, an agency of the United States federal government. It was administered, however by the Public Works Administration, which succeeded the Resettlement Administration in 1937 and undertook an extensive building program. The PWA constructed a total of 1,965 school buildings, 1/3 of which were elementary schools. Maryland was in "Region 1" of the PWA, where both traditional and modern styles were used in building design. In this region, schools and colleges tended to remain primarily traditional in character. Nearly 2/3 of the school buildings constructed by the PWA were outside of the center city, as was also the case with the Center School. Due to a changing curriculum in many school districts, new uses and rooms had to be incorporated in the designs. Common "new" functions included libraries, science labs, social science rooms, art rooms, music rooms, home-economics laboratories, industrial-arts rooms, agricultural labs, and other special-activity rooms, nearly all of which are found at the Center School. In addition, 76% of PWA constructed school buildings incorporated a gymnasium or combination auditorium/gymnasium.⁶⁷ The plans for PWA schools were developed through a collaborative effort involving the project architect and the superintendent for the school district. This was not the case for the Center School – here the government and its architects for the Greenbelt project planned all elements of the building – and only leased the building to Prince George's County Schools after completion.

The Center School was constructed in 1937 and was established as a focal element of the community; it is symbolic of Greenbelt community life.⁶⁸ It illustrates the cultural, social, political, and historical heritage of Greenbelt. The building is significant both for its architectural style and its importance to community planning. It is an integral part of the overall community and continues to serve the social atmosphere within Greenbelt. It facilitates the community life within the town and exemplifies the historical cooperative spirit of the community. The building originally housed classrooms, a music room, an arts & crafts workshop, a homemaking room, a health room, a social room, and the combined auditorium/gymnasium. The combination of uses was an "effort to draw community activities into closer contact with child education by combining the community hall with the grade school in one building." In addition, it "not only saved the cost of an extra building but also made possible greater social unity." The multiplicity of uses contributed to the organization of space within the structure. The library was near the main entrance of the building as well as the parking lot since it was one of the main spaces frequently used by Greenbelt residents. In addition, the arts and crafts shops were located across from the stage to facilitate easy storage of sets and costumes. The homemaking room was

⁶⁷ "Schools by Alice Barrows of the Office of Education, Federal Security Agency: A Study of School Buildings Erected with PWA Aid on which construction was completed or substantially completed before 1939, (c. 1939, book excerpt in possession of authors, XVIII-XXII.

⁶⁸ The Resettlement Administration also designed schools for Greenhills and Greendale which were combined education and community social centers.

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situated near the auditorium to readily service community parties and social gatherings.⁶⁹ Another feature that exemplifies the connection of the Center Elementary School with the greater community is its connectedness with other areas of the town via the system of walkways and underpasses. The building is readily connected with Greenbelt's commercial center, outdoor recreation areas, recreation building, Youth Center, and original housing units.

The Greenbelt Center Elementary School is an outstanding example of the modern architectural motif used throughout the city. Due to the fluted buttresses on the front façade, the building does show some characteristics of the Art Deco style of architecture. Other art deco forms include the geometric detailing, strips of windows, and the façade with its series of setbacks. The Center School lacks the more elaborate ornamentation found in many other art deco works. It does echo the traditional flat roof and simple, clean-lined facades of the Art Moderne movement, however. The extensive use of glass block and the innovative features incorporated into the design further exemplify the modernist style of architecture. The modern features include the smooth wall finish, the lack of ornamentation and the rounded corners of the building (illustrated in the interior tile work and on the details of the facades). The exterior design with "its white block exterior, dark green trim and sculpted façade, coupled with its central location in Greenbelt, ensures its place as an established and familiar visual feature to the community."

The bas-relief sculptures in Indiana limestone by WPA artist Lenore Thomas have received considerable attention as significant features of the Greenbelt Center Elementary School; they are excellent examples of New Deal art in bold, stylized forms. The panels underwent a full restoration in the 1990s. The six panels express key phrases from the Preamble of the Constitution. They are:

- "We the People," in three sections, showing a scientist with microscope and a farmer with pitchfork on the left; a family with two children with the U.S. Capital dome in the background at center; and a secretary with stenographic pad and miner with pick axe on the right.
- "To Form a More Perfect Union," showing a union of town and country with office workers to the left, apple harvester to the right, and in the middle a farmer and a man in a business suit facing each other and shaking hands.
- "Establish Justice," depicting a laborer with shovel, mother and child, mechanic with wrench, and schoolboy standing before a seating judge symbolizing justice.
- "Insure Domestic Tranquility," in two sections, showing the face to face meeting of farm in the form of a farmer holding a shock of wheat with city in the form of a factory worker with factory in the background. This panel is signed by the artist.

⁶⁹ Kavanagh, Marybeth, *The History, Social Use, and Meaning of the Greenbelt Center School, 1937-1943*, Masters Thesis, (University of Maryland, 2000), 51-52.

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- "Provide for the Common Defense," depicting five soldiers holding rifles in profile on the right juxtaposed against the citizens they are fighting for on the left: a male worker, a mother with babe in arms, and a boy holding a baseball bat.
- "Promote the General Welfare," in two sections, showing two construction workers on the left, one pushing a wheelbarrow of bricks, and a mother and her son on the right planting flowers.

Unique architectural features can be found throughout the Center Elementary School. In the auditorium/gymnasium, the stage was designed with twenty-foot deep trunks below. These trunks are accessible from the gymnasium space and were built to house large, heavy gym equipment, and chairs and other supplies for when the space was used as an auditorium.⁷⁰ The buttresses on the front and rear façades allowed for increased unobstructed interior spaces in the gymnasium. In the classrooms, the commercial-style sash allowed for generous amounts of daylight to enter the classrooms, while also permitting various degrees of ventilation. The use of glass blocks along the hallway side of the classrooms let the natural light entering the classrooms further permeate the hallways. The classrooms all included built-in coat racks and generous amounts of storage space. Most of these features still remain in the classrooms, even though the function of the rooms has now changed.

The 1968 addition to the Center Elementary School echoes the original architectural design, but is still easily distinguishable. The addition is constructed with the same painted white brick. The original building has three protruding brick bands around the top, while the addition has two bands. The windows on the addition are double-paned windows, with the bottom pane opening if pushed upwards. The windows on the addition are also cased with silver aluminum – as opposed to the painted green or burnt red casings on the original portion. The addition is not intrusive from the frontal view of the building. When looking from Crescent Road at the main façade, the addition is not noticeable.

The Significance of the Center School as a Model of Progressive Education

The Greenbelt Center School adapted the ideals of progressive education when designing the school's curriculum. This followed in line with the general idea of Greenbelt as a model town. The school's original staff was hired by the Farm Security Administration and consultants from Columbia Teacher's College, the premier source of progressive educational ideas in the United States, assisted in the development of the curriculum. C. Mabel Smith, a former professor at Columbia Teacher's College, and the principal of the progressive Parkside School in Montgomery County, worked as the primary curriculum consultant for the Center School.⁷¹ The Center School, in other words, while the federal government owned and administered Greenbelt, was intended to function as a demonstration project for progressive learning.

Progressive education was first promoted in the late 19th century. Under this model, classrooms were viewed as

⁷⁰ "Schools," *Architectural Forum* 68 (March 1938): 235.

⁷¹ Kavanagh, Marybeth, *The History, Social Use, and Meaning of the Greenbelt Center School, 1937-1943*, Masters Thesis, (University of Maryland, 2000), 62.

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"laboratories of social change." It was in the classroom that students were to learn to become good, upstanding citizens with high morals. The curriculum of progressive education included an emphasis on hands-on projects that were to teach the students how to better understand the society in which they lived. The theory was that through this understanding, children would be more willing and able to contribute back to and improve society.⁷² Rexford Tugwell was affiliated with the Progressive Education Association throughout the 1930s. The Association was influenced by the Social Reconstructionist Movement, which was centered at Columbia Teacher's College in New York City. The Social Reconstructionists were interested in redirecting progressive education away from middle-class, corporate America to a truly democratic and political orientation. They believed that classes should focus on contemporary social issues and problems.⁷³

The innovative curriculum was first implemented under the school's first principal, Catherine T. Reed (principal from 1937-1943). Reed was a native of Laurel, Maryland and a graduate of the Maryland State Normal School. The curriculum at the school was designed to use the town of Greenbelt as the focus for most of the studies. The lessons used the town plan, ideals of cooperation, participatory democracy, and people as subjects for study.⁷⁴ The set up of the school was also uniquely designed. The students were organized into four groups, instead of the traditional grade level system. The groups were: (1) children with no previous school experience; (2) second and third graders; (3) fourth and fifth graders; and (4) sixth and seventh graders. After the first year, a student would progress to the second group, where he or she would remain for two consecutive years. The intention of this system was to foster stronger relationships between teachers and students while at the same time alleviating pressure on students to perform and compete.⁷⁵ All of the classes were taught with a hands-on approach except for reading and math. These two subjects were taught "traditionally" with textbooks and workbooks. Throughout the curriculum, cooperative learning was constantly emphasized. There were no formal time periods for specific subjects and students would almost always work together to investigate and solve problems.⁷⁶ Children who grew up during the 1930s and 1940s in Greenbelt recall the extensive curriculum in ecology which took them out into the surrounding environment to study and experience nature at firsthand.

Catherine Reed resigned from the Center School in August 1943. She went on to take a position as the

⁷² Ibid 58-59.

⁷³ Ibid, 60.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 62.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 65-66.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 66-68.

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Superintendent of Elementary Schools for the Prince George's County Board of Education. Reed's successor as principal was Elizabeth Fugitt. She had previously worked as a teacher at the Center School from 1938-1940. She then went to work at the Parkside School from 1940-1943 under C. Mabel Smith (the primary curriculum consultant for the Center School) prior to returning to the Center School as the principal.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Ibid, 76-77.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # PG: 67-4-1

Name of Property

Greenbelt Center Elementary School

Prince George's, Maryland

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for the nominated property is consistent with the boundaries illustrated on tax map #12, grid f4, parcel 14.

Boundary Justification:

These are the historic and current boundaries of the Greenbelt Center Elementary School, as outlined in the original Greenbelt Plan.

Greenbelt Center Elementary School
Name of Property

Prince George's, Maryland
County and State

MIHP # PG: 67-4-1

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.76

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephanie Ryberg, Dr. Mary Corbin Sies, Dr. Isabelle Gournay

Organization University of Maryland, School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation date 1-31-05

street & number School of Architecture telephone 301-405-6284

city or town College Park state MD zip code 20742

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name City of Greenbelt, Department of Recreation

street & number Center Way telephone 301-397-2200

city or town Greenbelt state Maryland zip code 20770

Paperwork Reduction Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et. seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



Plate 1
 "Greenbelt School, Maryland"
 Photographer: Marion Post Wolcott
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress) PG:67-4-1

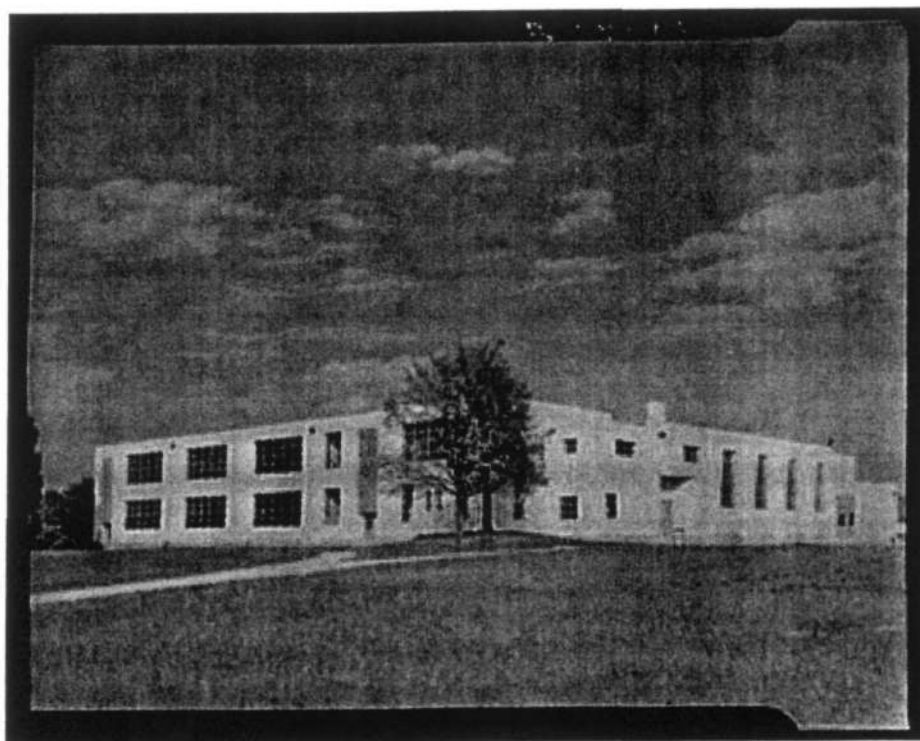


Plate 2
 "School at Greenbelt, Maryland"
 Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress) PG:67-4-1



Plate 3
 "School at Greenbelt, Maryland"
 Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress)

PG:67-4-1



Plate 4
 "Corridor in the Greenbelt School, Maryland"
 Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress)

PG:67-4-1



Plate 5
 "Gymnasium in Greenbelt School, Maryland"
 Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress)
 PG:67-4-1



Plate 6
 "School room, Greenbelt, Maryland"
 Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress)
 PG:67-4-1

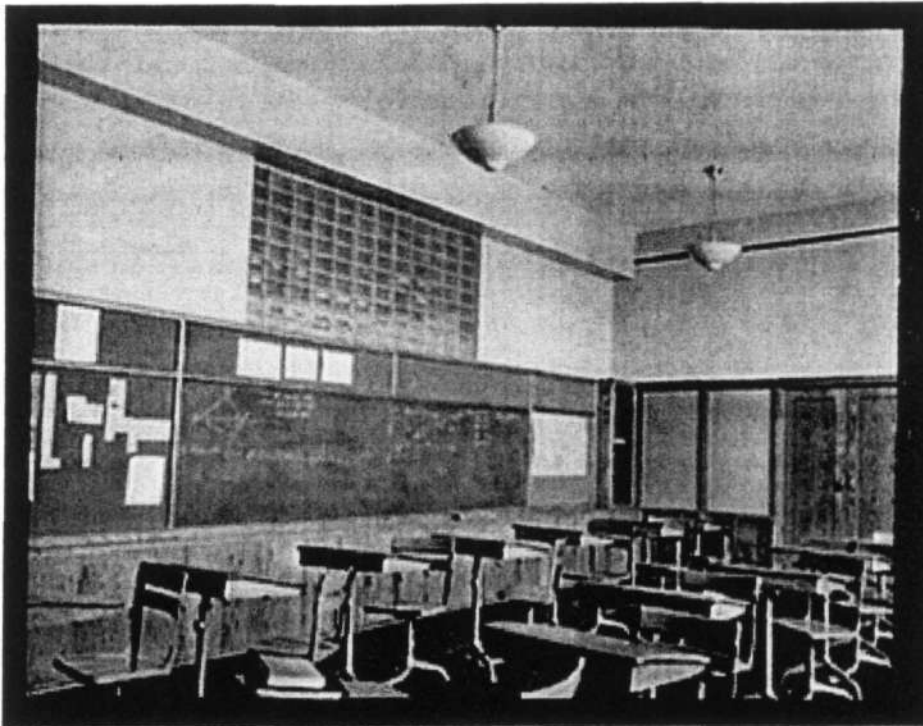


Plate 7
 "Classroom at Greenbelt, Maryland school"
 Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress)
 PG:67-41

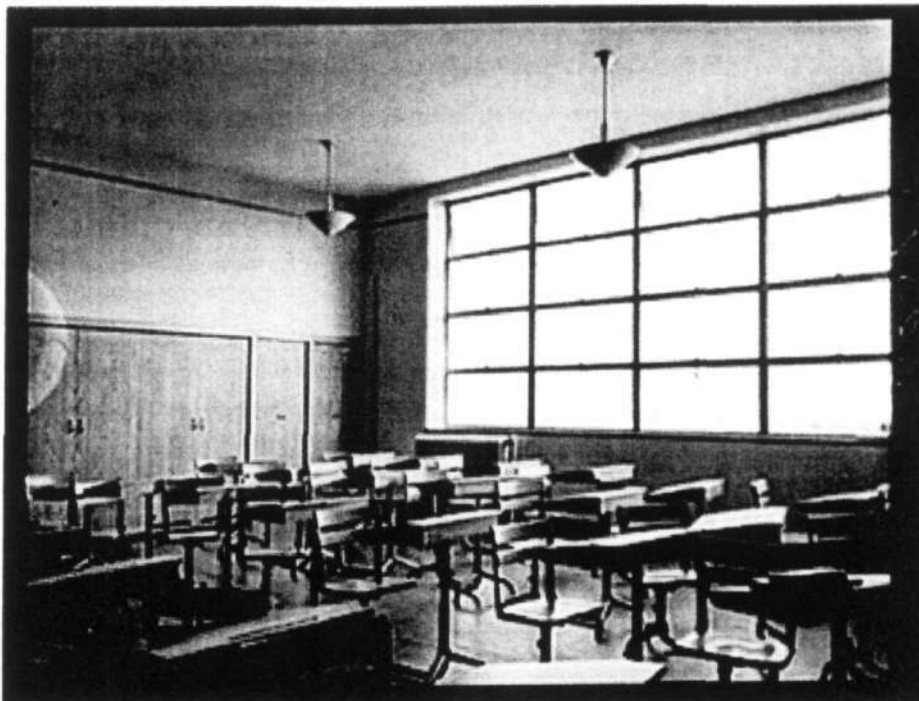


Plate 8
 "Classroom in the Greenbelt School Maryland"
 Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
 Date: 1938
 Farm Security Administration - Office of War
 Information Photograph Collection (Library of
 Congress)
 PG:67-41

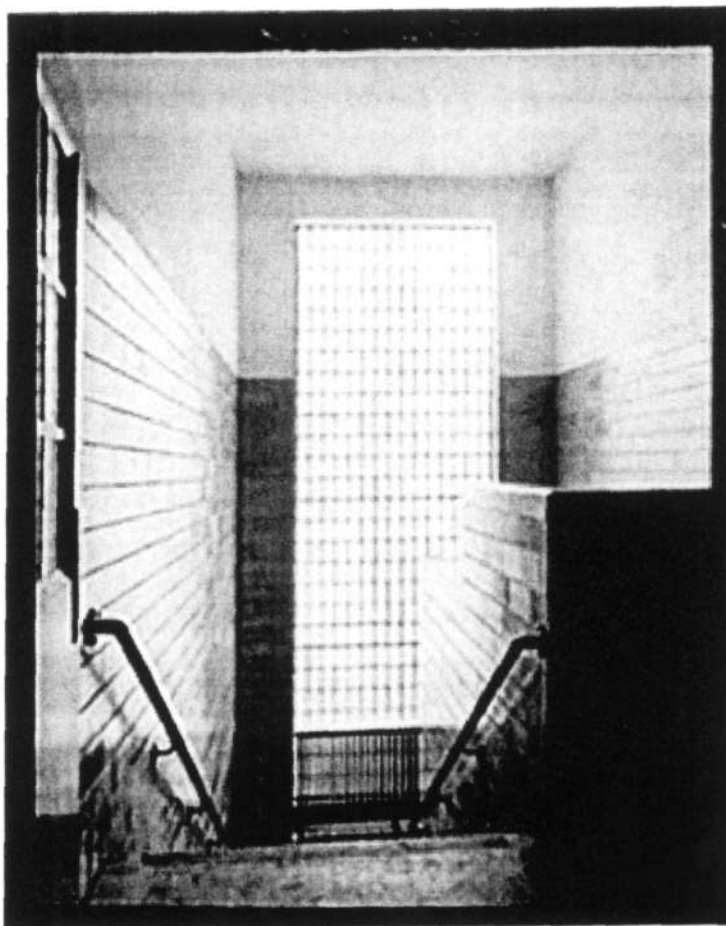
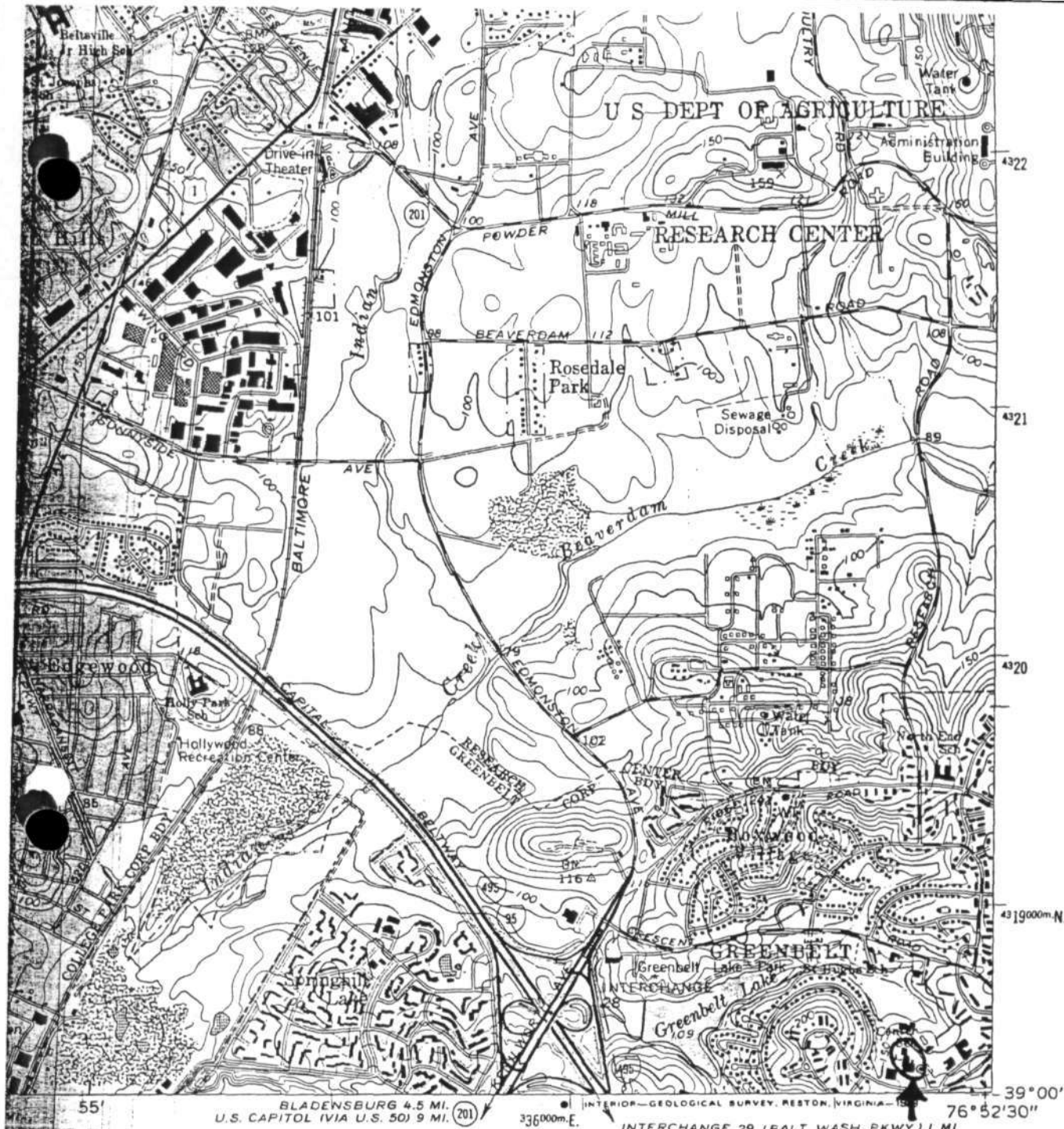


Plate 9
"Stairway in the Greenbelt School, Maryland"
Photographer: Arthur Rothstein
Date: 1938
Farm Security Administration - Office of War
Information Photograph Collection (Library of
Congress)

PG:67-4)



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty _____ Light-duty _____
 Medium-duty _____ Unimproved dirt _____

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
 McKeldin Library

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

DEC 29 1969

BELTSVILLE, MD.
 SW/4 LAUREL 15' QUADRANGLE
 39076-A8-TF-024

U. S. DOCUMENTS

1964
 PHOTOREVISED 1979
 DMA 5662 III SW-SERIES V833

MIHP # PG:67-4-1
 Greenbelt Center Elementary
 School
 Greenbelt, Prince George's County, MD
 Beltsville, Maryland
 SW/4 Laurel 15' Quadrangle
 1964, revised 1979



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Boundary lines shown in purple compiled from latest information available from the controlling authority
 Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)
11 Crescent Road
Greenbelt, MD
Prince George's County, MD

Isabelle Gournay

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

East facade of 1938 east-west portion

#1



PG: 67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)
11 Crescent Road
Greenbelt, MD
Prince George's County, MD

Isabelle Gournay
April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Front (South) facade showing large front lawn

#2



PG: 67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (community center)

11 Crescent Rd.

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Isabelle Gournay

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Rear (north) facade of 1938 east-west corridor

#3



Greenbelt Center School (Community Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

PG:67-4-1

Prince Georges County, MD

Isabelle Gournay

April 2003

Maryland Historical Trust

East Facade of 1968 edition

#4



PG: 67-41

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community
Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Isabelle Gournay

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

April 2003

#5



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)
11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Isabelle Gournay

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

West facade of 1938 north-south corridor
(parking and drive of Greenbelt library
in the foreground)

#6



PG: 67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Isabelle Gournay

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Front facade showing bar relief panels and
secondary entrance

#7



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Isabelle Goumay

April 2003

2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Detail of bas relief panel



PG:67-41

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

520 0539 N N-1 76 2 (040)
>038

Maryland Historic Trust

North-south corridor showing glass block panels,
glazed blocks and lighting fixtures

#1



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

520 0539 N N N N 40 2 (040)
< 037

Maryland Historic Trust

East-west corridor with glazed block on the
walls and original woodwork and fixtures

#16



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

520 0539 N N N N 69 2 (040)
>036

Maryland Historic Trust

Auditorium / gymnasium

#11



Greenbelt Center Elementary School (community center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

< >035
520 0539 N N N N 39 2(040)

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Corridor of the 1968 edition



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

< 034
520 0539 N N N 76 2 (040)

Maryland Historic Trust

interior stairwell

#13



② Use 3 Louis bottles

③ Rinse in distilled water
You will

④ Do NOT LEAVE

PG:67-4-1
Greenbelt Center Elementary School (Community Center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

520 8539 N N N 54 2 (040) 030 >

Maryland Historic Trust

Classroom with original chalkboard, glass
block, and woodwork

#14



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (community center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

< 026

520 0539 N N N N 94 2 (040)

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Interior Stairwell with large glass block window

#15



Greenbelt Center Elementary School (community center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince George's County, MD

< 025

520 0539 N N N 1 43 2 (040)

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Classroom with original fixtures

#16



Greenbelt Center Elementary School (community center)
11 Crescent Road
Greenbelt, MD
Prince George's County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg
April 2003

520 0539 N N 2 60 2 (040)
> 023

Maryland Historic Trust

casement windows in a classroom



PG:67-4-1

Greenbelt center Elementary School (community center)

11 Crescent Road

Greenbelt, MD

Prince Georges County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg

April 2003

520 0539 N N N 33 2 (040)
> 022

Maryland Historic Trust

Second floor corridor

#18



PG: 67-4-1

Greenbelt Center Elementary School (community center)
11 Crescent Road
Greenbelt, MD
Prince George's County, MD

Stephanie Ryberg
April 2003

520 0539 N N 2 34 2 (040)
< 017

Maryland Historic Trust

West facade , glass block windows

#19

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey # 67/4-1

Building Date 1937; add'n 1968

Building Name Greenbelt Center School

Location 11 Crescent Road, Greenbelt, Maryland

Open to Public: ☒ Yes ☐ No Occupied: ☒ Yes ☐ No Use: school

The Greenbelt Center School is a L-shaped building, centrally located next to the Municipal Building and separated from Crescent Road by a park. It has a white block exterior with dark green window trim and has bas relief sculpted panels along the front facade of the building. It has curved aerodynamic struts along the front facade, rectilinear windows and glass brick along the sides and rear of the building. The interior features wood construction, colored tile designs on floors and walls and original fixtures. Bas - relief sculpted panels along the front facade of the building depict the Preamble to the Constitution. The 1937 building and its 1968 addition to the rear consists of 5 levels.

The Greenbelt Center School is significant as an outstanding example of the streamlined phase of the Art Deco style of architecture, being low in scale and combining straight and simple lines and streamlined form. The bas relief sculpted panels were carved by Lenore Thomas, a New Deal WPA artist also responsible for the Mother and Child Sculpture in the Greenbelt Center Mall. The school building was designed by Reginald Wadsworth and Douglas Ellington, Resettlement Administration architects who also designed the rest of the original town.

The Greenbelt Center School is also significantly culturally as integral to the planned community of Greenbelt. Built in 1937, the building provided thirteen classrooms for kindergarten and elementary grades during the day and space for community activities at night.

The building represents an established visual feature of the community; it became one of the central focal points of Greenbelt community life, both because it was within a short walk of homes and because it provided many facilities -- music, health, and homemaking rooms, an arts and crafts center, room for religious services, movies, dances, town fairs and political meetings.

The structure served as both the school, community building and library until 1959 when it was sold to the Board of Education. It continued to house the Greenbelt Public Library until 1971.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Greenbelt Community Building

and/or common Greenbelt Center School

2. Location

street & number 11 Crescent Road ___ not for publication

city, town Greenbelt ___ vicinity of congressional district Fifth

state Maryland county Prince Georges

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
___ district	<u>X</u> public	<u>X</u> occupied	___ agriculture ___ museum
<u>X</u> building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial ___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	<u>X</u> educational ___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment ___ religious
___ object	___ in process	<u>X</u> yes: restricted	___ government ___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial ___ transportation
	<u>X</u> not applicable	___ no	___ military ___ other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Board of Education, Prince Georges County

street & number 14524 Elm Street telephone no.: (301)952-4350

city, town Upper Marlboro state and zip code Maryland 20772

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Land Records liber 2357

street & number Prince Georges County Courthouse folio 436

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Greenbelt Historic District

date November, 1980 X federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records National Register for Historic Places

city, town Washington state DC

7. Description

Survey No. PG:67-4-1

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Greenbelt Center School has been termed one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in the Washington, D.C., area. According to Richard Striner, President of the Art Deco Society of Washington: "In the past three years, in researching a book on Art Deco in Washington, my co-author and I inventoried over 360 Art Deco structures...in the Washington area. Of these, the Greenbelt Center School is in our opinion one of the two finest examples."¹ James Goode, Keeper of the Smithsonian Castle, says of the Center School: "Indeed, the streamlined front facade... ranks as one of the five best (Art Deco structures) in the Washington, D.C., area."² Constructed in 1937, the school embodies the distinctive characteristics of Art Deco in that it is low in scale, combining straight and simple lines, streamlined form, and a general massing of building, and features curved aerodynamic struts along the front facade, rectilinear windows and glass brick along the sides and rear of the building. The interior features wood construction, colored tile designs on floors and walls and original fixtures. The building, including a 1968 addition, now consists of five levels. The addition echoes the original architectural design. Bas-relief sculpted panels along the front facade of the building furnish additional artistic value to the design. The panels depict the Preamble to the Constitution (We the People...) and were carved by Lenore Thomas, a New Deal WPA artist also responsible for the Mother and Child sculpture in the Greenbelt

Greenbelt Center School-Prince Georges County

7. DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

Center Mall. The panels on the Center School reflect the idealism of the New Deal in that at the time there was great interest in the common man. The school building was designed by Reginald Wadsworth and Douglas Ellington, Resettlement Administration architects who also designed the rest of the original Greenbelt. Architecturally, the school shares the simple functional design dominating the community as a whole; however, its white block exterior, dark green trim and sculpted facade, coupled with its central location in Greenbelt, ensure its place as an established and familiar visual feature to the community. The building is both "...a fine example of Art Deco and New Deal aesthetics."³

8. Significance

Survey No. PG:67-4-1

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	Built 1937	Builder/Architect	Douglas Ellington,
	Addition 1968		Reginald Wadsworth
check:	Applicable Criteria:	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D
	and/or		
	Applicable Exception:	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G
	Level of Significance:	<input type="checkbox"/> national	<input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Greenbelt Center School is significant for the following reasons: From an architectural perspective, it well exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of Art Deco; historically, it is an integral part of the original Greenbelt community constructed by the Resettlement Administration as a showcase of urban social planning and symbol of New Deal idealism; and socially it has served as both Community Building and Center School and continues to function as a focus of the community life of Greenbelt.

Art Deco became an established category of structure on the National Register of Historic Places by precedent of a 1979 designation of the Miami Beach, Florida, Historic District. Art Deco emerged from the 1925 Paris exhibition on the decorative and industrial arts ("L'exposition internationale des arts decoratifs et industriels modernes"). It was a link between the avant-garde, industrial designers, and mass consumption culture of the 1920's and 1930's. Art Deco proved the middle path between historic revivals and radical modernism's rejection of ornamentation. Streamlining was Art Deco's apotheosis, with its sense of power, yet control. Art Deco evolved from a jazzy, ornate style in the

Greenbelt Center School-Prince Georges County

8. SIGNIFICANCE (CONTINUED)

1920's to incorporate a newer vogue for streamlining in the 1930's.

The Greenbelt Center School was built by the Resettlement Administration as an integral part of the planned community of Greenbelt, the purpose of the latter being that of providing housing for low and moderate-income persons. In the plans of Greenbelt architects Wadsworth and Ellington, the town was accorded a community building which was to serve as the social and educational center with rooms for libraries, meetings, and recreation. In 1937, the building provided thirteen classrooms for kindergarten and elementary grades during the day and space for community activities at night. On the basis of its facilities, which included music, health and homemaking rooms and arts and crafts center, and the school's location within a short walk of homes, the Community Building became one of the central focal points of Greenbelt community life. Under its roof were housed variously religious services, movies, dances, town fairs and political meetings. The structure served as the Community Building until 1959, when it was sold to the Prince Georges County Board of Education. Until 1971, the building also housed the Greenbelt Public Library. In its present and past forms, the Center School

Greenbelt Center School-Prince Georges County

8. SIGNIFICANCE (CONTINUED, PAGE 2)

exemplifies the cultural, social, political and historical heritage of Greenbelt and Prince Georges County.

As an integral part of the original Greenbelt community, the Center School has value in terms of the development of American urban and social planning. The Greenbelt community was internationally acclaimed as an urban social experiment. The Center School, in its part, represents the primary symbolic reflection of the Greenbelt spirit.

It (the school) was to become one of our best-loved buildings, for it was here that all segments of citizenry were to meet, discuss their mutual problems, worship, study and play.⁴

President Franklin D. Roosevelt paid a visit to Greenbelt in its early stages, wheelchair ramps being constructed for his inspection of the Center School. Eleanor Roosevelt came alone to Greenbelt on several occasions to study its unique educational and community philosophy.

In summary, the Greenbelt Center School meets the following criteria of the Prince Georges County Historic Sites and Districts Plan: 1a. (character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County, State or Nation), and 1d. (exemplifies cultural, economic, industrial...or

Greenbelt Center School-Prince Georges County

8. SIGNIFICANCE (CONTINUED, PAGE 3)

historical heritage of the County and its urban and rural communities). Additionally, the Center School fulfills the following architectural and design criteria:

1a. (embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction), 1c. (possesses high artistic values), and 1e. (represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. PG:67-4-1

Arnold, Joseph. The New Deal in the Suburbs: A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-54. Columbus, Ohio, 1971.

Hillier, Bevis. The World of Art Deco. New York, 1971.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

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F

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G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

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Verbal boundary description and justification _____

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tracy Dillard/Richard Striner

organization Art Deco Society of Washington

date November 7, 1983

street & number P.O. Box 11090

telephone _____

city or town Washington

state District of Columbia

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

Greenbelt Center School-Prince Georges County

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

Leuchtenburg, William. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. New York, 1963.

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Greenbelt Center School-Prince Georges County

FOOTNOTES

¹Richard Striner, President, Art Deco Society of Washington. Testimony at August 15, 1983 hearing, Prince Georges County Board of Education, Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

²James Goode, Keeper of Smithsonian Castle. August 11, 1983 letter to Prince Georges County Board of Education. Entered into testimony at August 15, 1983 hearing, Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

³John Ames Steffian, Dean, School of Architecture, University of Maryland. Testimony at August 15, 1983 hearing, Prince Georges County Board of Education, Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

⁴Greenbelt, 25th Anniversary, 1937-1962 (Brochure prepared under the auspices of the Silver Anniversary Committee), p. 42.



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Greenbelt Center School

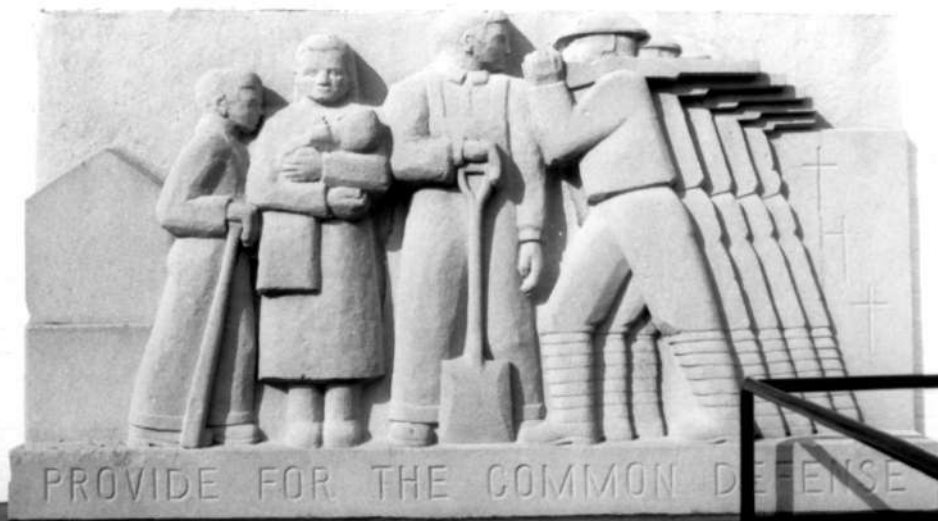
Prince George's County, MD

Susan G. Pearl

October 1984

South entrance

Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



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Greenbelt Center School

Prince George's County, MD

Susan G. Pearl

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South - Common Defense panel

Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



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South - General Welfare panel

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South - Tranquillity panel

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South-Justice panel

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South-Perfect Union panel

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West stairhall

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South elevation

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